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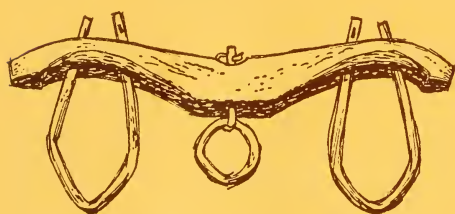
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Hart, F.W.

Abraham Lincoln The Great Commoner
The Sublime Emancipator

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The Great Commoner

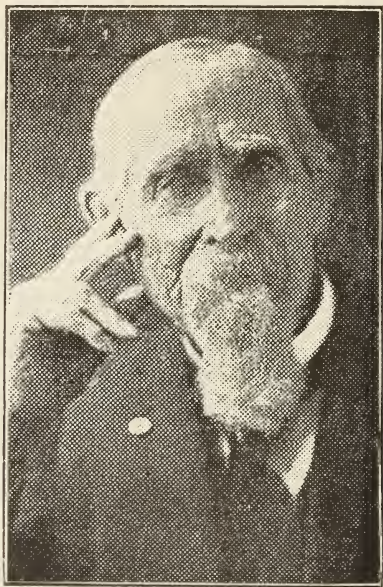
The Sublime Emancipator

By COL. F. W. HART

1926

Price 10 Cents





COL F. W. HART

This is a copy of the concluding chapter of my Lincoln biography, which I hope to have published in the near future and ready for sale. This folder containing an account of the last hours of the President's life and the incidents of his foul assassination will be left at the drug and book stores of our city for sale at ten cents, with the understanding that the purchaser can have his money refunded, if he desires, by returning the folder within a week from the date of sale.

F. W. Hart

Huntington Park, Calif.

F. W. Hart

Abraham Lincoln

By
COL. F. W. HART

The Assassination of the President.

Assassination of the President

The five days following the surrender of Lee were the happiest of all days to the loyal people of America; for the black war cloud had passed away, peace had been restored, and all were rejoicing over the glorious consummation. President Lincoln and his cabinet were happy in the consciousness of work well done, also in the added thought that at last, the great rebellion had been crushed and the conquest of the nation's foes had been effected. But on the night of the fifth day, April 14th, the joy of the whole earth was changed to mourning, for that night witnessed the saddest, or one of the saddest tragedies ever known or written, in all the pages of recorded history, the assassination of the great and beloved war-President. Of this, I will speak later.

The burdens of the long war had worn heavily on the President, so much so as to be observable to all; and one day he was heard to say: "I think I shall never be glad again," but the reception of the good news from the front on the 9th had wrought a wonderful change in his looks and general appearance. Indeed, a marvelous transformation was shortly apparent.

Hon. James Harlan of Iowa, a member of the United States Senate, and afterwards, of the cabinet, in speaking of Mr. Lincoln

during those happy memorable days, says: "His whole appearance, poise and bearing had marvellously changed. He was in fact transformed."

He goes on to say that his indescribable sadness formerly apparent "had been suddenly changed to an equally indescribable expression of serene joy, as if conscious that the great purpose of his life had been achieved."

On the day in which the news of Lee's surrender at Appomattox was received, the cabinet meeting was held an hour earlier than usual. Neither the President nor any member of the cabinet was able for a time, so a writer says, to give utterance to his feelings. "At the suggestion of Mr. Lincoln, they all dropped on their knees and offered, in silence and in tears, their humble and heart-felt acknowledgements to the Almighty for the triumph He had granted to the national cause."

Mr. Lincoln's Last Speech

Of the many notable and memorable addresses delivered by Mr. Lincoln during his eventful career, the following was his last. On Tuesday evening, April 11th, '65, he was serenaded at the White House, and this was his response:

"Fellow Citizens: We meet this evening not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart. The evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond, and the surrender of the principal insurgent army give hopes of a right-

eous and speedy peace whose joyous expression cannot be restrained. In the midst of this, however, He from Whom all blessings flow must not be forgotten. A call for a national thanksgiving is being prepared and will be duly promulgated. Nor must those whose harder part gives us the cause of rejoicing be overlooked. Their honors must not be parceled out with the others. I myself was near the front (He had just visited and returned from Richmond) and had the high pleasure of transmitting much of the good news to you; but no part of the honor, for plan or execution is mine. To General Grant, his skillful officers and brave men, all belongs. The gallant navy stood ready, but was not in reach to take active part. By these recent successes, the re-inauguration of national authority, reconstruction, which has had a large share of thought from the first, is pressed much more closely upon our attention. It is fraught with great difficulty."

He speaks further of the embarrassment necessarily attending the solution of such national problems, and then closes by saying: "In the present situation, as the phrase goes, it may be my duty to make some new announcement to the people of the South, I am considering, and shall not fail to act, when satisfied that action will be proper."

Before retiring from the crowd, the President requested the serenading band to play "Dixie," saying, "we have a right to that tune now." Little did Mr. Lincoln and the admiring multitude think that would be his last address; but such it proved to be.

That Fatal Day, Good Friday

Throughout the length and breadth of the land, there was one jubilant cry, on April 14th, 1865, and that was "The war is over."

The air was vibrant with the spirit of universal rejoicing; and it is said by his friends that Mr. Lincoln never seemed to be more glad, more serene than he did on that day, the 14th of April. All nature seemed to combine to make things lovely. The warm, balmy air, of that spring morning, fragrant with the odor of blossoming trees and shrubs along the hillside and fringing the Potomac, in the gardens and city parks, was delightfully refreshing. The prevailing good cheer of the White House was enhanced that morning by the presence at the breakfast table of the President's oldest son, Captain Robert T. Lincoln, an aide de camp of General Grant's staff, who had arrived from the front that morning. The important events of the Wilderness campaign, with the closing scenes thereof were doubtless discussed, with absorbing interest, by father and son.

The President's heart was further delighted by the early arrival of General Grant, that morning. The purpose of the General's call this time was not to discuss new plans for the further prosecution of the war, as on former occasions, but to talk of peace, and the unbounded cheer and delight it would bring to the people—to all the people.

The cabinet convened early in the morning, Friday being the regular day for such meeting, and General Grant was invited to remain at the session.

It should be remembered that at

this time, General Joe Johnstone had not surrendered to General Sherman (though he did shortly afterwards) and intense interest centered in General Sherman's movements. General Grant was questioned as to his convictions regarding the probable outcome. He was optimistic in his thought and expressed the opinion that Johnstone's capitulation would be only a matter of a few days, which proved true.

Much of the time at the meeting was consumed in the discussion of the question and policy of reconstruction, which naturally would soon come to the fore.

The President took this, the first opportunity, to express himself as opposed to any policy or act of vindictiveness or revenge towards the people of the South.

He had agreed with General Grant, all along, that a complete conquest or suppression of the rebellion was the only policy to be pursued, if a restoration of peace was ever attained. But now, as the South was conquered, it was not wise or necessary to add to their humiliation.

The President further remarked that "He hoped there would be no persecution, no bloody work, after the war was over."

He further stated that "We must extinguish our resentment if we expect harmony and union." It was his desire that a feeling of good will and cooperation with the South should be encouraged.

These were the impulses of his noble heart and generous nature.

Many entertained the opinion then and since (and the writer concurs therein) that if President Lincoln had survived, the long,

bitter, acrimonious debates in Congress, during the years of reconstruction would have been avoided.

The cabinet meeting having adjourned, and the lunch having been served, the President suggested to Mrs. Lincoln that they take an afternoon drive. He dispensed with the services of a coachman, evidently wishing that no one should accompany them, that they might the better enjoy the converse alone.

"Mary," said he, "we have had a hard time of it since coming to Washington, but the war is over, and with God's blessing we may hope for four years of peace and happiness and then we will go back to Illinois and pass the rest of our lives in quiet."

He also spoke of his Springfield home, the incidents of his early days, the law office, the cottage in which their four children were born, etc., thus throwing off the tension of war days, and enjoying once more, in anticipation, the scenes of their early life in their far-off prairie home.

"We have laid up some money," he continued, "and during this term we will try and save up some more."

He admitted, however, that he might not have enough to support them comfortably, in which event he might open a law office in Springfield or Chicago, and thus earn enough to afford them a livelihood during their declining years.

On their return from their drive, the President met a number of his friends, one of the number being an old time associate, Governor Richard Oglesby, of Illinois.

During the afternoon, the President performed two acts of mercy,

one of them being the pardon of a deserted soldier, sentenced to be shot, saying as he did so. "The boy can do more good above the ground than under ground."

The other act was his approval of an application for discharge of a Rebel prisoner, on his taking the oath of allegiance, on whose petition he wrote, "Let it be done."

Previously, a theater party for that evening had been made up by the Mistress of the White House, and General and Mrs. Grant were to be her guests. They were to see Laura Keene at Ford's Theatre, in "Our American Cousin." The box had been secured early in the day, and a large number arranged to attend, in anticipation of seeing the presidential party and seeing the "Hero of Appomattox." The manager of the Theatre had given extended publicity in the afternoon papers that the "President and his lady" together with "General and Mrs. Grant" would be present that evening to attend Miss Keene's benefit.

It was ascertained late in the afternoon that General Grant and lady had changed their plan and had decided to go North that night. This occasioned great disappointment all around, and some one, perhaps the President, suggested that the party be given up; but lest the public be disappointed the President thought it best to keep the engagement. A couple of young friends were then invited to take the place of General and Mrs. Grant, which invitation was gladly accepted.

The President met Speaker Colfax that afternoon and cordially invited him to accompany him and

Mrs. Lincoln to the theater that night, but owing to a previous engagement to start west that night, Mr. Colfax had to decline.

The Presidential party was a little late getting started; and then shaking hands with a few friends, he accompanied Mrs. Lincoln to the carriage, and were driven off quickly to the theater. It is said that the President and party arrived about the middle of the first act and were received with hearty applause. The band played "Hail to the Chief" and all eyes were turned to the distinguished guests occupying the box.

A large arm chair was placed to the front and left for the President's use, which on arrival, he occupied, Mrs. Lincoln taking a chair to his right. The accompanying guests occupied seats in the rear.

About the middle of the third act, a foul assassin in the person of John Wilkes Booth approached stealthily from the rear and sent a bullet crashing through the brain of the great President. He leaped from the stage, flourishing a dagger, having dropped his revolver crying "Sic semper tyrannis" thus be it always to tyrants.

In his descent from the stage Booth's spur caught in the flag, which brought him to the floor, fracturing a bone in his left leg. This seemed to be providential, for by this accident, his flight was impeded and his escape made impossible.

He disappeared through a rear door, and hastened to his horse that he left in the alley, and mounting quickly, rode rapidly away. At the President's box, all was in commotion. The shrieks

and moans of Mrs. Lincoln could be heard above the din, and were heart rending. The President was seen to partially rise after the shot; but sank back in his seat, by help of an attendant, his head falling on his breast.

A few soldiers improvised a stretcher and placing the limp, unconscious form thereon, bore him tenderly across the street to a private home. One of these soldiers told me of this sad incident, many years thereafter. In a few moments, several army surgeons were by his bedside and did all that mortal men could do to resuscitate their distinguished patient; but in vain. Around his bedside stood several of his friends, including Judge Wm. T. Otto, an old time acquaintance and friend, holding his hand, also, Attorney General Speed, and Rev. Dr. Gurney, the President's pastor while in Washington.

One writer speaks of the scene and surroundings with much pathos, as follows: "Leaning against the wall, stood Secretary Stanton, who gazed now and then at the dying man's face, and who seemed overwhelmed with emotion. From time to time, he wrote telegrams or gave orders, which, in the midst of the crisis, assured the preservation of peace."

I think all the remaining members of the cabinet (except Secretary Seward, who had been assaulted by a would-be assassin the same night) were present, and several Senators, as well, pacing up and down the corridor.

At last, about seven-thirty in the morning of April 15, the surgeon announced that death was near, and a few minutes later, the pulse

ceased to beat. The dying man never regained consciousness from the moment he received the fatal shot.

It is said that "Mr. Stanton approached the bed, closed Mr. Lincoln's eyes, and drawing the sheet over the dead man's head, uttered these words in a very low voice:

"He is the man for the ages."

The news of the sad tragedy was flashed over the country that day, almost paralyzing the people.

Never had the nation been convulsed in such deep mourning; sorrow, like a funeral pall, brooded over and settled down on the people. I had returned from the army and re-entered college. No more study or recitations that day. The old college bell seemed to peal out the solemn words, "Lincoln's dead, Lincoln's dead."

All business was suspended. Men gathered in groups to discuss the sad news, while others passed each other in silence, the weeping eye, the falling tear indicating the sorrow of heart within. Old men and women, alike, would meet and weep like children.

Never was a public man held in such endearing relationship. Even the picture of the martyred President on the wall was sufficient to evoke expressions of sorrow, often mingled with tears. At Washington the President's remains lay in state in the capitol for a few days, viewed by a large number of sorrowing citizens, when the funeral train, with its precious freight, the bereaved widow and family and a few friends, including Bishop Simpson, commenced its long and mournful journey from Washington to Springfield, Ill. This was done that the dear form might

have its last resting place, near his former home, amid the scenes of his early struggles and triumphs, surrounded by those he had loved and served so well. In going to Springfield, the train took the same route that Mr. Lincoln and family had taken in coming to Washington, four years before. Thus, they passed through Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, thence westward through Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, to Springfield.

Through all that journey, in every city, hamlet and town, through which they passed sorrowing citizens in large numbers turned out to pay a tribute of love to their fallen chieftain.

At Springfield, a vast concourse of people had assembled to show their appreciation of their former distinguished citizen and be present at the last sad rites.

At the memorial services, Bishop Simpson, the eloquent Methodist Divine, a warm, personal friend of the late President, delivered an able and impressive funeral oration. In closing, he expressed the hope that the spirit and mantel of

the great Elijah (Lincoln) might fall on the young Elisha (Robert) and then invoking the blessing of the Father of all mercies upon our stricken country, upon the deeply bereaved family and upon the large assemblage then present, he closed. Loving hands then bore the precious form to its last resting place, where it will remain in quiet, undisturbed slumber till the morn of eternity's dawn shall awake him to an eternal day.

What inspiration and hope to the young men of America is thus afforded by the life and character of this great man.

Without early training, in due time he became self-educated, aspired to and became a great lawyer, an eloquent speaker, and an eminent statesman. By his unaided aspiration, without political influence, he carved his way from the lowest position to the highest, in the gift of the people, and having reached the summit at last, "From the topmost round of fame's ladder, he stepped to the skies."

THE END

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